CLAIMS

[0044]   What is claimed is:

1. A collaborative development environment comprising:

an integrated development environment; and

a collaboration client integrated into said environment.

2. An environment according to claim 1, and wherein said collaboration client comprises a discussion client.

3. An environment according to claim 2 and wherein said discussion client comprises means to select a discussion to join and means to participate in a selected discussion.

4. An environment according to claim 1 and wherein said collaboration client comprises at least one gauge indicating the status of collaboration discussions.

5. An environment according to claim 4 and wherein said collaboration discussions are those relevant to the user of said environment.

6. An environment according to claim 2 and wherein said discussion client comprises means to select users to receive a question.

7. An environment according to claim 6 and wherein said collaboration client comprises a context fetcher.

8. An environment according to claim 6 and wherein said collaboration client comprises means to communicate with a collaborative development server.

9. An environment according to claim 7 and wherein said context fetcher comprises means to determine the context of the work performed by the user of said integrated development environment.

10. A Help menu of a software application, said menu comprising:

sections to provide information about said software application; and

a peer support section to provide access to a collaboration server.

11. A menu according to claim 10 and wherein said peer support section comprises a discussion client.

12. A menu according to claim 11 and wherein said discussion client comprises means to select a discussion to join and means to participate in a selected discussion.

13. A menu according to claim 11 and wherein said discussion client comprises means to select users to receive a question.

14. A menu according to claim 11 and wherein said discussion client comprises means to communicate with a collaborative development server.

15. A method comprising:

       having peer support available from within an integrated development environment.

16. A method according to claim 15 and wherein said having comprises providing a user with at least one list of existing topics of discussion and providing said user with a selector to select one of said topics.

17. A method according to claim 16 and wherein said second providing also comprises providing said user with a window in which to participate in a selected discussion.

18. A method according to claim 17 and wherein said third providing comprises retrieving said selected topic from a collaborative development server.

19. A method according to claim 16 and wherein said having comprises determining a context of work for a user of said peer support.

20. A method according to claim 19 and wherein said providing comprises selecting from said existing topics those related to said context of work.

21. A method according to claim 19 and wherein said having comprises providing a user with means to ask questions of peers.

22. A method according to claim 21 and wherein said providing comprises determining a context of work for a user of said peer support.

23. A method according to claim 21 and wherein said providing comprises selecting from among a list of said peers those related to said context of work.

24. A method comprising:

selecting topics of discussions based on work being performed in an integrated development environment.

25. A method according to claim 24 and wherein said work is defined by at least one of the following: the current file, the current class, the current object, the current project, and the current function.

26. A computer product readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for peer support, said method comprising:

having peer support available from within an integrated development environment.

27. A product according to claim 26 and wherein said having comprises providing a user with at least one list of existing topics of discussion and providing said user with a selector to select one of said topics.

28. A product according to claim 27 and wherein said second providing also comprises providing said user with a window in which to participate in a selected discussion.

29. A product according to claim 28 and wherein said third providing comprises retrieving said selected topic from a collaborative development server.

30. A product according to claim 27 and wherein said having comprises determining a context of work for a user of said peer support.

31. A product according to claim 30 and wherein said providing comprises selecting from said existing topics those related to said context of work.

32. A product according to claim 30 and wherein said having comprises providing a user with means to ask questions of peers.

33. A product according to claim 32 and wherein said providing comprises determining a context of work for a user of said peer support.

34. A product according to claim 32 and wherein said providing comprises selecting from among a list of said peers those related to said context of work.

35. A product comprising:

selecting topics of discussions based on work being performed in an integrated development environment.

36. A product according to claim 35 and wherein said work is defined by at least one of the following: the current file, the current class, the current object, the current project, and the current function.